

# E

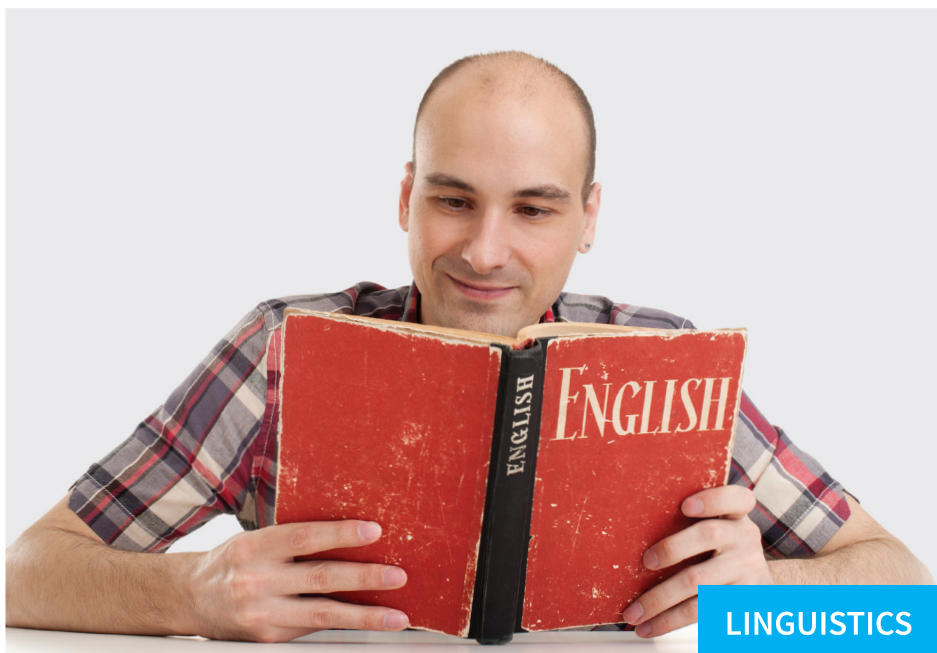
editors

Ewa Waniek-Klimczak

Anna Cichosz

---

## Variability in English across time and space



LINGUISTICS

PHONETICS, DIALECTOLOGY, HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS



WYDAWNICTWO  
UNIwersytetu  
ŁÓDZKIEGO

# *Mandeville's Travels* and the study of Middle English word geography: a corpus-based analysis of selected verbs

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/8088-065-8.06>

**Paulina Rybińska**

*University of Lodz*

## **Abstract**

This paper presents an example of a study that deals with lexical choices in the Middle English period. It aims to first investigate whether the choice of the verbs in the two regionally distinct versions of the Late Middle English book *Mandeville's Travels* is text-dependent or region-dependent, which would then show to what extent the results of the comparison may be observed in other Middle English texts. In addition, it checks whether the choice of the verbs is influenced by their etymology. This study in progress is hoped to partially contribute both to the field of Middle English word geography and to the examination of the aforementioned text in general.

## **1. Historical dialectology**

As stated by Laing and Lass (2006: 418), “[h]istorical dialectology is simply historical linguistics with a spatial emphasis; in the same sense, historical linguistics is simply linguistics with a temporal emphasis.” Particularly, this area of linguistics pays attention to linguistic changes which occurred in certain time in the history and across different regions.

The main difference concerning present-day and historical dialectology is that the data in the latter case can only be collected on the basis of the existing written sources (Fisiak 1982). First of all, many texts or manuscripts did not survive till present. Secondly, the preserved texts reflect the written, not the spoken mode. Moreover, we do not have many information, from the so-

ciolinguistic point of view, about the people who wrote them. Despite of this, the tools used for historical dialectology make this discipline “an important laboratory for the achievement of increasingly reliable findings” (Dossena and Lass 2009: 7).

Fisiak (1982) proposes to divide the functions of historical dialectology into static (synchronic) and dynamic. Static functions aim at “establishing isoglosses (consequently producing atlases) for certain periods in the history of a language” (ibid.: 118). On the other hand, dynamic functions are directed towards giving information about changes regarding, for instance, dialect boundaries.

One of the major principles when studying languages’ development is to put the emphasis on context – either regional or social (Dossena and Lass 2004). Even though these factors assume a divergent point of view on the study of language, they do not exclude each other (Meurman-Solin 2000a, 2000b). Actually, one should be aware of the fact that the influence of both of them on linguistic data is of crucial importance (Dossena and Lass 2004).

## 2. Middle English dialect situation

The linguistic situation in England after the Norman Conquest was complex. Despite of the fact that the prestigious functions of language were taken over by French and Latin, English was still spoken, mainly by the lower classes of society. The fact that there was no “standard” variety is the main reason for Middle English dialectal diversity (Crystal 2004). Scribes were trying to illustrate the way people spoke, so it can be assumed that the great variation concerning spelling is a reflection of people’s pronunciation (McIntyre 2009). According to Crystal (2004: 212), “within each manuscript there will be distinctive linguistic features – spellings, words, and grammatical constructions – that can be assumed to be diagnostic of their locality.”

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, John Trevisa, a Cornish writer, distinguished between “Southeron, Northeron, and Myddel speche” of Middle English (Burrow and Turville-Petre 1996: 6). In fact, it is the least complicated division that can be made. Historical dialectologists suggest the division into five conventional dialect areas. Conventional, because of the great dialectal diversity that existed during those times.

The map representing the Middle English dialect areas is shown below:



**Map 1.** Middle English dialects of England (<http://kids.britannica.com/comptons/art-143574/Middle-English-dialects-of-England>)

In the preface to *Eneydos* translation, William Caxton included a comment which may be treated as an early attempt to characterize the variability in the English language during standardisation. "Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, *egges* or *eyren*? Certaynly it is harde to playse euery man by cause of dyuersite & chaunge of langage." According to Caxton's comment, the most noticeable contrast was seen between northern and southern regions – not only distinct from each other in space, but also subjected to diverse linguistic influences. The word of Old Norse origin, *egg*, was predominant in the north, whereas the native form *ei* was much more popular in southern dialects.

The issue of the north-south divide has already been recognized in the writings of William of Malmesbury (1125). Moreover, throughout the whole Middle English period writers commented on people's attitudes towards these two dialects. In 1387, Ranulph Higden wrote in his *Polychronicon*:

All the speech of the Northumbrians, and especially at York, is so harsh, piercing, and grating, and formless, that we Southern men can hardly understand such speech. I believe that this is because it is near to outlandish men and foreigners, who speak in a foreign language, and also because the kings of England always live far away from that region (from the translation of 1387 Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*; Crystal 2004: 216/217).

Not only southerners had problems with comprehension of the northern variety. The anonymous author of *Cursor mundi*, a chronicle written in the north, mentions that he had to translate a fragment of text written in southern English into his own variety, so that his readers could understand it: "In sotherin englis was it draun. And turnd it haue I till our aun language o northrin lede, þat can nan oijer englis rede" (Crystal 2004: 207).

The differences between the abovementioned dialects concerned not only spelling and grammatical structures, but also lexicon. Interestingly enough, research in dialect vocabulary of Middle English has been perceived by many scholars as a neglected field of historical linguistics (Kaiser 1937; McIntosh 1973, 1978; Benskin and Laing 1981; Hudson 1983; Hoad 1994; Fisiak 2000). As Fisiak (2000) states, "[h]istorical word-geography of English, particularly Old and Middle English, is still a very much underdeveloped area of research although its importance has been recognized for a long time."

According to Black (2000: 455), "[w]ord geography may fairly uncontroversially be defined as the mapping out of words across space: the part of dialectology that deals with lexis." One of the first representative investigations concerning lexical choices in the Middle English period was conducted by Rolf Kaiser in 1937. He examined how some words in the northern version of *Cursor mundi* were replaced by a southern scribe. Kaiser assumed that the replacement was due to the fact that certain lexical items were not present or not widely used in the southern dialect (Hoad 1994). Another approach to word geographical studies is represented by the scholars compiling the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*. The assemblage of as many linguistic data as possible is the basis for further observations regarding the occurrence of regionally distinct lexicon (Hoad 1994).

One of the possible reasons why Middle English word-geography studies are regarded as a neglected field of historical linguistics is related to the problem of establishing strict criteria when conducting such research. Due to Middle English dialectal diversity, we discover a plethora of various forms which are sometimes ambiguous in terms of classification; in other words, the assignment of these

forms to particular linguistic categories, such as phonology (in Middle English represented through spelling), morphology, or lexis may be disputable. As Benskin and Laing (1981: 94) state, “[i]t may of course be arguable whether a given item represents translation lexical rather than orthographic, orthographic rather than morphological, or morphological rather than lexical.” For example, some linguists decide to treat the difference between forms such as ‘kirk’ and ‘chirch’ as orthographic, but others perceive this as a lexical difference. To be sure, in such cases it is of greater importance to look for different word-forms, and exclude those forms which do not contribute to the studies concerning lexical choices. To sum up, the field of historical word-geography studies is certainly problematic when it comes to methodological issues, mainly when one attempts to define what may constitute a lexical difference as opposed to spelling or morphological variation.

### 3. Methodology

The study aims to first investigate whether the choice of the verbs in the two regionally distinct versions of *Mandeville's Travels* is text-dependent or region-dependent, and then to check if this phenomenon is determined by words' etymology or is independent of it.

For the purpose of the study, the following thesis statement was formulated: The choice of the verbs in the two regionally distinct versions of *Mandeville's Travels* is region-dependent and influenced by words' etymology. Furthermore, the following research questions were asked:

1) *Does the choice of the verbs depend on region?*

In other words, it will be investigated whether the choice of the verbs in the two regionally distinct versions of one text, namely *Mandeville's Travels*, is text-dependent or region-dependent. Then, it will be checked if the results from MT can also be noticed in other chosen Middle English texts from different regions.

2) *Is this phenomenon determined by words' etymology or is independent of it?*

Because of the influence of Old Norse, it is expected that borrowings from this language will be predominant in the chosen northern texts. On the other hand, French borrowings are assumed to be more widespread in texts from the south. According to Wardale (1958: 40), “it may be said that Old Norse came in first in the north-east and north, French in the south and south-east.” As Crystal (2004: 148) states, “[t]he

loans took their time to move north: in early Middle English there were far more French loans in southern texts, and an even spread does not emerge until the later period.” Presumably, native Old English words might appear both in the north and in the south. To be more precise, the following situations are expected:

- 1) words of Old Norse would appear predominantly in the north
- 2) words of Old Norse origin wouldn't appear exclusively in the south
- 3) words of native origin would appear both in the north and in the south
- 4) words of French origin would appear predominantly in the south
- 5) words of French origin wouldn't appear exclusively in the north

First stage of the analysis involved the comparison of the first three chapters of two geographically distinct versions of *Mandeville's Travels*: northern – London, British Library, Egerton 1982, and southern (written in the East Midland dialect) – London, British Library, Cotton Titus C.16. According to *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (LALME), the northern MS. is localized in North Riding of Yorkshire; the southern one – in Hertfordshire.



**Map 2.** Egerton 1982 – Yorkshire (NRY)  
(<http://en.wikipedia.org>)



**Map 3.** Cotton Titus C. 16 – Hertfordshire  
(<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

*Mandeville's Travels* or *The Book of John Mandeville* was written in French c. 1356. The authorship is unknown. It comprises various stories of people and places during the journey from Europe to Jerusalem and Asia. The great popularity of the book resulted in many translations. After some time, a copy of the

French version was carried into England. The oldest English translation is known as the Defective version, which constitutes the source text for two regionally different copies: *Cotton* and *Egerton*. Probably, the northern version was transcribed from the southern one. Both copies are dated c. 1420 (Seymour 2002).

During the second stage of the analysis four representative texts both from the northern and East Midland regions (approximately the same time period) were chosen for further examination. When choosing the texts, geographical division made by Anna Hebda in one of her articles (2010) was mostly used as a basis.

**Table 1.** Selected northern and East Midland texts (based on Hebda 2010)

North	East Midland
<i>The wars of Alexander</i> (Ashmole 44)	<i>Guy of Warwick</i> (Auchinleck)
<i>The pricke of conscience</i> (Glb E. ix & Hrl)	<i>Confessio amantis</i> (Frf 3)
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	<i>Merlin</i> (Cmb Ff.3.11)
<u>Mandeville’s Travels</u> (Egerton 1982)	<u>Mandeville’s Travels</u> (Cotton Titus C. XVI)

As can be seen, both versions of the whole *Mandeville’s Travels* book are also present in this classification.

First of all, the two versions of *Mandeville’s Travels* had to be copied into *Excel* and arranged into two columns. Thanks to this, it was possible to observe variation between these two texts. So far, the first three chapters of each version were analyzed (c. 7200 words). Since the study is devoted to lexical choices, obvious spelling and grammatical/morphological variation was ignored. As ‘lexical differences’ I understand words/phrases that were used as equivalents in exactly the same contexts in both versions. For example, the difference between *thurgh* and *porgh* will be treated as spelling rather than lexical one, whereas between *wenden* and *gon* – as lexical. An exemplary comparison is shown below:

**Table 2.** Exemplary comparison

North	South
he	he
will,	wole
<i>wende</i>	<i>go</i>
thurgh	porgh
Almayne	Almayne



For the purpose of this article, twelve verb pairs have been chosen for further analysis. Originally, the main criterion was to choose the most frequently appearing verbs pairs, but because of the fact that only two verb pairs occurred more than one time (*callen-clepen* – nine times, *opposen-examynen* – three times), I decided to select them randomly: from the first chapter – *wenden-gon*, *callen-clepen*, *taken-receiven*, *gon-entren*; from the second chapter – *waten-knowen*, *stirren-meven*, *opposen-examinen*, *forsaken-denien*; from the third chapter – *grauen-beryen*, *trowen-hopen*, *lousen-assoilen*, *okeren-vsuren*<sup>1</sup>.

The next stage of the research involved qualitative analysis. The aim of the qualitative analysis was to determine whether a given word may be treated as northern or southern by checking its etymology in the *Middle English Dictionary* or the *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

What is more, due to the availability of the electronic version of the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, the distribution of spelling variants of some verbs was possible to be found and then shown using dot maps. Unfortunately, the *Atlas* does not provide maps for the majority of verbs that were chosen for the analysis. Thus, quantitative analysis had to be conducted. The aim was to compare the distribution of the words in question in the chosen representative texts from the north and the East Midland region, and to check whether the words labeled as ‘northern’ appear also in southern texts, and if those labeled as ‘southern’ appear in the north. If such instances occur, possible explanations will be provided. This part of the analysis was conducted using the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*. It is a collection of digitized copies of about 150 works in Middle English, assembled from a number of sources including University of Michigan faculty, the Oxford Text Archive, and the Humanities Text Initiative. To be sure, only the selected texts (Table 1) were searched through using the *Corpus*.

---

<sup>1</sup> The chosen verb pairs are listed as infinitives and according to their order of appearance in the texts.

## 4. Results and analysis

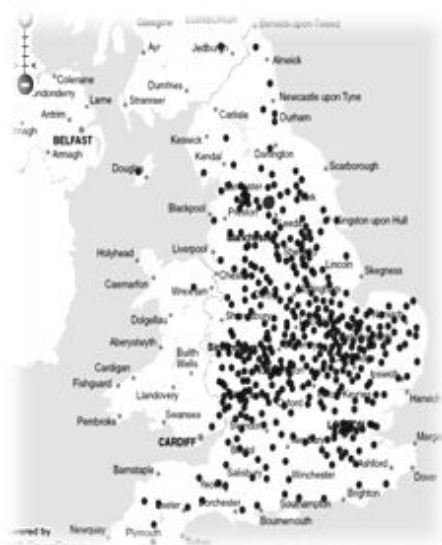
### 4.1. Wenden/Gon

**Wenden** (v.) [OE *wendan*, *wændan*, (Nhb.) *woendan*]. According to *Etymonline*, “*wend* (v.) *to proceed on*, Old English *wendan to turn*, *go*.

**Gon** (v.) [OE *gān*; sg. 2 *gæst*; sg. 3 *gæþ*; pl. & impv. pl. *gāþ*; inflected inf. *tō gānne*; p.ppl. *-gān*. In OE, the past forms are usually supplied by *ēode* & *gangan*; in ME, they are supplied by *yēde*, *gangen*, *wenden*, q.v.]

*Wenden* is expected to be predominant in the north rather than in the south, while *gon* – to be more popular in the south.

The distribution of both forms was checked in *eLALME*. The results are shown on the maps below:



**Map 4.** *Wenden* – distribution (generated from <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html>)



**Map 5.** *Gon* – distribution (generated from <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html>)

As can be seen, *wenden* is distributed across the whole country. *Gon* is predominant in the south. However, it is worth mentioning that northern variants with <a> are not present in the *Atlas* (forms such as *ga*, *gas*, etc.). Nevertheless, when searching through the *Corpus* the variants with <a> were included as well.

The results of the quantitative analysis actually differ from previous expectations as far as the northern texts are concerned.

**Table 3.** *Wenden/gon* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Wenden		Gon	
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (N)	50	26%	139	74%
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	41	68%	19	32%
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	71	58%	51	42%
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	35	51%	33	49%
<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>49%</b>

**Table 4.** *Wenden/gon* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Wenden		Gon	
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (S)	4	1%	291	99%
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	186	34%	357	66%
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	88	15%	493	85%
<i>Merlin</i>	112	17%	539	83%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>83%</b>

Both in the northern and East Midland texts we can notice a preference for *gon* rather than *wenden* forms. It is not surprising, because it was *gon* which eventually became a standard form. What is particularly visible is that *gon* in the first table outnumbers *wenden* forms only in one text, namely *Mandeville's Travels*. Presumably, the northern manuscript in this case demonstrates great affinity with the East Midland manuscript it was transcribed from.

#### 4.2. *Callen/clepen*

*Callen* (v.) is a borrowing from Old Norse. Thus, it is expected to be found in northern rather than in East Midland texts.

It means particularly *to call (sth. by a certain name), name (sb. sth.), call (sb. good, etc.); ppl. called, named; (b) ~ bi (to) name, to call (sb.) by (a name)*. The other meaning is *to summon (sb.), call (sb. to a place), call (sb. to do sth.)*.

*Clēpen* (v.) [A *cliopian, cleopian*, from West Saxon *clipian, clypian*.]. This word is expected to be characteristic of the south rather than of the north.

Again, two meanings of this word: *to apply (a name, epithet, title, expression, or designation to sb. or sth.), name (sb. so and-so), and to ask, request, or order (sb.) to appear (in a place or in someone’s presence); summon, call, send for; invite.*

Possible spelling variants of these two verbs can be found in *eLALME*:



**Map 6.** *Callen* – distribution (generated from <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html>)



**Map 7.** *Clepen* – distribution (<http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html>)

As can be seen on the maps, the distribution of the variants suggests that *call* was more common in the north with a tendency to spread downwards. *Clepen* was certainly more popular across southern regions. Red dots denote provenance of the northern and East Midland versions of *Mandeville’s Travels*.

The results of the quantitative analysis are presented in the tables below:

**Table 5.** *Callen/clepen* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Callen		Clepen	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	46	100%	–	–
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	56	100%	–	–
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	51	96%	2	4%
<i>Mandeville’s Travels</i> (N)	393	100%	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1%</b>

As far as the northern texts are concerned, we have an overall number of only two instances of the use of the southern variant *clepen*. To compare, *callen* is used 546 times. The instances of *clepen* can be found in *Works by Rolle* in the examples shown below:

IS CLEPED

(..) þe first degre **is cleped** Insuperable, þe tother Inseparable, þe thridde Singuler.

(...) and þe fore it **is cleped** inseparable, for it may not be departed fro thoght of Ihesu Crist.

(Ms. Rawlinson A 389 [folio 81])

ES CALLED

þe fyrst degre **es called** Insuperable. þe secund Inseparabl. þe third Singuler.

(Ms. Rawlinson C 285 [folio 40])

Surprisingly, we can see inconsistency, because the author used two various forms in exactly the same contexts.

Let us move on to the analysis of the East Midland texts:

**Table 6.** *Callen/clepen* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Callen		Clepen	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	8	9%	77	91%
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	46	23%	153	77%
<i>Merlin</i>	29	12%	215	88%
<i>Mandeville's Travels (S)</i>	90	20%	353	80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>84%</b>

As can be seen in the table, the southern variant *clepen* is much more frequent, but 173 contexts with the northern variant appeared. Most of these cases are not surprising, since it was the northern variant that eventually became a standard form. But let us look at some specific examples from *Guy of Warwick*:

CALL

And commaunded his dukes and barons **all**  
To bee redy in armes at euery **call**.

CALLE

Pou art me leuest of oþer **alle**,  
For þi 'leman' ichil the **calle**;

CALLED

ON WITSONDAYE **called** Pentecoste (title)  
And Guye seide, 'my fader **is called** Sywarde

In *Guy of Warwick*, both *call* and *calle* appeared because of rhyming. In the examples presented above, *call* had to rhyme with *all*. Apart from this, *called* was used two times in this text: first – in the title, second – in the statement *my fader is called Sywarde*. As the present study is not a diachronic one, it cannot be proved that the phrase *is called* was becoming more and more popular in the south and that it was gradually replacing the older form *is cleped*. Nevertheless, quantitative analyses show that there existed variation in the southern texts as regards these two verbs.

In *Confessio amantis* all the instances of the northern variant are a matter of rhyming (with such words as *alle*, *befalle*, *falle*, *withalle*, *halle*, and *befalleth*, *fall-eth*). An interesting example is the one presented below. Both southern and northern forms are used here:

Noght upon on, bot upon alle  
It is that men now **clepe and calle**

In *Merlin*, 29 instances may indicate a change in progress (fixed phrase *is called*). Of course, the southern form *clepen* is still predominant – 215 instances.

Finally, the southern version of *Mandeville's Travels*:

CALLE

And it was wont to be **clept** Collos & so **calle** it the Turkes 3it

(...) but 3if þat the Emperour **calle** ony man to him þat him list to speke with aH.

**CALLED (70)** – either change in progress ('is called') or editor's notes.

As can be seen, *calle* was used twice: in the first example – probably to avoid repetition with *clept*; in the second example – we have different meaning of *call*, namely *to summon sb.*

70 instances of *called* indicate either change in progress – high frequency of the phrase *is called*, or editor's notes, written in present-day English, which should be excluded in the future so as not to influence the results.

To sum up, qualitative analysis proves that *callen* can be treated as a predominantly northern word, while *clepen* – as a southern one. Furthermore, it is not surprising that the northern form *callen* can also be found in the East Midland texts – this phenomenon may point to variation in this region. However, many of the uses of *callen* in the chosen East Midland texts are a matter of rhyming.

#### 4.3. Taken/Receiven

**Taken** (v.) [LOE **tacan**, p.sg. **tōc**, pl. **tōcon**, from ON (cp. OI **taka**, pr.sg. **tek**, **tekr**, p.sg. **tōk**, pl. **tōku**, ppl. **tekinn**).]

**Receiven** (v.) [OF **recevoir**, **recever**, **receivre**, **recivre**, **rechever**]

The meaning is, among others, *to take (a material object) into one's hand or possession, accept possession of (sth.)*.

The map in *eLALME* was available only for *taken*. As can be seen, not many forms were found. They are visible predominantly in the north.



**Map 8.** *Taken* – distribution (generated from <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html>)

The results of the quantitative analyses are as follows:

**Table 7.** *Taken/receiven* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Taken		Receiven	
<i>Mandeville’s Travels</i> (N)	121	100%	–	–
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	40	100%	–	–
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	71	97%	2	3%
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	94	84%	18	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5%</b>

**Table 8.** *Taken/receiven* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Taken		Receiven	
<i>Mandeville’s Travels</i> (S)	131	99%	1	1%
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	148	99%	1	1%
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	395	89%	47	11%
<i>Merlin</i>	410	96%	19	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1084</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>4%</b>



*Taken* is significantly more frequent in the north, but also in the East Midland region. This may testify to the growing popularity of this Old Norse borrowing across the whole country and its later standardization.

4.4. *Gon/entren*

**Gon** (v.) [OE *gān*; sg. 2 *gāest*; sg. 3 *gāþ*; pl. & impv. pl. *gāþ*; inflected inf. *tō gāne*; p.ppl. *-gān*. In OE, the past forms are usually supplied by *ēode* & *gangan*; in ME, they are supplied by *yēde*, *gangen*, *wenden*, q.v.]

**Entren** (v.) [OF *entrer*]

It means *to enter into a confined space or a situation*.

Table 9. *Gon/entren* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Gon		Entren	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	19	44%	24	56%
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	51	93%	4	7%
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	33	100%	–	–
<i>Mandeville’s Travels</i> (N)	139	85%	24	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>80,5%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>19,5%</b>

Table 10. *Gon/entren* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Gon		Entren	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	357	99%	1	1%
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	493	100%	–	–
<i>Merlin</i>	539	79%	141	21%
<i>Mandeville’s Travels</i> (S)	291	80%	73	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>89,5%</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>10,5%</b>

According to the qualitative analyses, *entren*, despite its Old French origin, is not predominant in the southern texts. Moreover, even the basic text is not consistent as regards the appearance of the abovementioned verbs. It would be interesting, then, to look at specific examples in the future.

#### 4.5. Waten/Knowen

The information about **waten** was impossible to find in *MED*. It is a very old word that we know from such Old English sentence as 'Ic nat' ('I don't know').

**Knouen** (v.) [OE **cnāwan**, **on-**, **ge-**, **tō-**; p. **-cnēow**; ppl. **-cnāwan**. In ME, **ou** occurs in present forms & p.ppl. of the M & S dialects, perh. also (rarely) in the N dialect; **au** (from **ou**) occurs in the present forms of M, N, & K, in the p.ppl. of M, N, & S. P. forms are often used with a present subjunctive sense.]

The results of the quantitative analyses are shown in the tables below:

**Table 11.** *Waten/knouen* – frequency (N)

East Midland texts	Waten	Knowen	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	6	10%	6
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	27	20%	27
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	47	46%	47
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (N)	30	37,5%	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>110</b>

**Table 12.** *Waten/knouen* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Waten	Knowen	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	–	54	100%
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	–	216	100%
<i>Merlin</i>	–	457	100%
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (S)	–	83	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>100%</b>

Surprisingly, no instances of *waten* were found in the East Midland texts. It means that this word might have simply become obsolete. Some traces of this form can be observed in the north, but there is a preference for *knowen* anyway.

#### 4.6. *Stiren/meven*

***Stiren*** (v.) [OE styrian, stirian, stirgan].

It means *to change the location of (sth.), move, shift; dislodge (sth.)*.

***Meven*** (v.) [OF mover, meuvre, muevre, moevre & AF moveir, muve(i)r; also cp. L. movere.]. It means *to move (sb. or sth.), shift; remove (sth.), dislodge; move (sth.) about*.

It is expected that *stiren* would be predominant in the north, and *meven* – in the south.

The distribution of the words in question is presented below:

**Table 13.** *Stiren/meven* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Stiren		Meven	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	7	29%	17	71%
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	5	38%	8	62%
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	32	94%	2	6%
<i>Mandeville's Travels (N)</i>	12	75%	4	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>41%</b>

As the table shows, *stiren* is predominant in the north, but *meven* is also frequent. In the first two texts it even exceeds the number of *stiren* forms. An interesting example of the use of the two variants can be found in *Mandeville's Travels (N)*:

for men may see þare þe erthe of þe toumbe many a tyme stirre and moue,  
as þer ware a qwikke thing vnder.

The table below shows the distribution of *stiren/meven* in the East Midland texts:

**Table 14.** *Stiren/meven* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Stiren		Meven	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	–	–	1	100%
<i>Merlin</i>	1	2%	61	98%
<i>Mandeville's Travels (S)</i>	6	55%	5	45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>91%</b>

What can be seen is that *meven* is generally more frequent (67 instances). Both *stiren* and *meven* are not present in *Guy of Warwick*. *Meven* visibly outnumbers *stiren* in *Merlin*. One instance of it is present in *Confessio amantis*. Surprisingly, *Mandeville's Travels* (S) book is not consistent as far as the choice between the two forms is concerned.

#### 4.7. Opposen/Examinen

**Opposen** (v.) [OF **oposer**] According to *MED*, it means *to question or interrogate (sb.); examine (heart, conscience, confession); ask (sb.) a question; -- also without obj.; (b) to accuse (sb.) of (sth.), charge; (c) to torment (sb.); (d) to examine or audit (sth.)*.

**Examinen**, **-ene(n)** (v.) Also **exam(p)n** [OF **examiner**, L **exāmināre**]. It means *(a) to investigate, examine (something); to scrutinize, consider critically, appraise*.

Taking into account the words' origin, it is expected that both forms will appear more frequently in the south, with no visible discrepancies between their distribution.

**Table 15.** *Opposen/examinen* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Opposen		Examinen	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	–		–	
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	–		–	
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	–		–	
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (N)	3	75%	1	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25%</b>

**Table 16.** *Opposen/examinen* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Opposen		Examine	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	22	96%	1	4%
<i>Merlin</i>	1	25%	3	75%
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (S)	9	53%	8	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>42%</b>

As the tables show, the words in question were present only in *Mandeville's Travels* (N). *Opposen* appeared 3 times, while *examinen* – only once. However, in the East Midland texts both forms are more popular, with *opposen* being predominant. It is especially visible in *Confessio amantis*. The two versions of *Mandeville's Travels* are not consistent.

4.8. *Forsaken/Denien*

**Forsāken** (v.) P. forsōk, -sūk (N); ppl. forsāken, -sāked. [OE forsacan, forsōc; cp. also OE sacan *contend, disagree, accuse*, etc.].

**Dēnien** (v.) Also denaien, denoien, disnoien. [OF deniier, deneiier, denoiier, desnoier (from L dēnegāre)].

It is expected that *forsaken* will be characteristic of the north; *denien*, being a French borrowing – characteristic of the East Midland region.

The following tables show the frequency of the words in question in the selected texts from the northern and East Midland regions.

Table 17. *Forsaken/denien* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Forsaken		Denien	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	6	100%	–	–
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	15	94%	1	6%
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	32	100%	–	–
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (N)	8	80%	2	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>93,5%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6,5%</b>

Table 18. *Forsaken/denien* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Forsaken		Denien	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	4	100%	–	–
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	44	100%	–	–
<i>Merlin</i>	24	83%	5	17%
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (S)	6	86%	1	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8%</b>

As can be seen, *forsaken* is considerably more frequent in the north than *denien* (61 vs 3 instances). On the other hand, the high frequency of *forsaken* forms in the south may testify to its being popular in the East Midland region from the very beginning or its growing popularity.

#### 4.9. Grauen/beryen

**Grāven** (v.) – [OE **grafan**; **grōf**, **grōfon**; **grafen**.]

It means (a) *To bury (a corpse), place (sb.) in a grave; fig. to swallow up (a damned soul); (b) to put (sth.) under the ground, cover with earth, bury.*

According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, OE *buryen* (v.) means *to raise a mound, hide, bury*, akin to *beorgan* “to shelter,” from Proto-Germanic \**burzjan* “protection, shelter”.

These two lexical units of native origin are expected to be found in both regions.

**Table 19.** *Grauen/beryen* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Grauen		Beryen	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	4	80%	1	20%
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (N)	18	100%	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10%</b>

**Table 20.** *Grauen/beryen* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Grauen		Beryen	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	3	33%	6	67%
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Merlin</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (S)	–	–	22	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16,5%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>83,5%</b>

As can be seen, generally, there is a preference for *grauen* forms in the north and for *beryen* forms in the south. The discrepancy between the *Mandeville* versions is caused probably due to the lacunae in the *Egerton* manuscript. Interestingly, as shown in the example below, on one occasion the phrase *puttez him in þe erthe* was used additionally:

(...) and, when he es deed, þai bere him in to þe felde and **puttez him in þe erthe** (*Egerton MS.*)

(...) and whan he draweth towards the deth euery man fleeth out of the hous till he be ded & after þat þei buryen him in the felde (*Cotton MS.*)

4.10. *Trowen/hopen*

**Trouen** (v.) – [OE *trūwian*, *trūwigan*, impv. *trūa* & *trēowan*, *trȳwan* & *trēowian*, *trēowigan*, *trȳwian*].

According to *MED*, *trouen* means, among others, (a) *To have trust, be trustful; rely (on sb. or sth.), place one’s confidence (in sb.), trust (in God).*

**Hopen** (v.) – [OE *hopian*]

It means (b) *to have trust, have confidence; assume (sth.) confidently, presume; trust (that sth. is the case); trust (to have sth.).*

Because of the words’ native origin, they are expected to be distributed similarly in the north and in the south.

Table 21. *Trowen/hopen* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Trowen		Hopen	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	21	55%	17	45%
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	28	90%	3	10%
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	24	52%	22	48%
<i>Mandeville’s Travels (N)</i>	60	98%	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>26%</b>

**Table 22.** *Trowen/hopen* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Trowen		Hopen	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	18	72%	7	28%
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	26	70%	11	30%
<i>Merlin</i>	60	94%	4	6%
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (S)	35	97%	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17%</b>

According to the tables presented above, *trowen* forms are more popular both in the northern and southern texts. Interestingly, in Gower's *Confessio amantis* both forms appeared together:

I speke it forth and noght ne leve:

And thogh it be beside hire leve,

I **hope** and **trowe** natheles

That I do noght ayein the pes.

#### 4.11. *Lousen/assoilen*

***Lōsen*** (v.) – this verb comes from the adjective ***lōs***, which is of Old Norse origin.

According to *MED*, it means (a) *To free (sb. from physical constraint, prison, hell, etc.); untie (an ass, a dog), (b) to free (sb. from someone's control, from an obligation, from sin or distress, etc.); release (sb. from the cloister); absolve (sb.) from sin.*

***Assoilen*** (v.) Also ***asoili(e, as(s)oli***. [OF ***assoiler, -ir, assolir, -ier***].

(a) *To absolve (sb.) of sin by divine or sacerdotal authority; grant (sb.) remission of sins or penance.*

The first verb is expected to be found in the northern texts, the second – in the southern ones.



**Table 23.** *Lousen/assoilen* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Lousen		Assoilen	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	5	62,5%	3	37,5%
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	2	100%	–	–
<i>Mandeville's Travels (N)</i>	2	100%	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>87,5%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12,5</b>

**Table 24.** *Lousen/assoilen* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Lousen		Assoilen	
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	–	–	1	100%
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	–	–	3	100%
<i>Merlin</i>	–	–	2	100%
<i>Mandeville's Travels (S)</i>	–	–	2	100%
<b>Total</b>	–	–	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in the tables, the word of Old Norse origin, *lousen*, did not appear in the southern texts at all. As far as the northern texts are concerned, *assoilen* was found only in *The pricke of conscience*, but the instances of *lousen* still prevail.

#### 4.12. Okeren/vsuren

**Okeren** (v.) – from **ōker** (n.1) of Old Norse origin; (a) *To lend (money, goods) at interest*; (b) *to make a loan (to sb.) at interest*.

**Vsuren** (v.) – from Old French **usurer**; *To make a loan at interest, practice usury; lend money at interest (to sb.)*.

Taking into account the words' etymology, *okeren* might be predominant in the north, whereas *vsuren* – in the south.

**Table 25.** *Okeren/vsuren* – frequency (N)

Northern texts	Okeren		Vsuren	
<i>The wars of Alexander</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>The pricke of conscience</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Works by Rolle</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (N)	1	100%	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>	–	–

**Table 26.** *Okeren/vsuren* – frequency (EM)

East Midland texts	Okeren		Vsuren	
<i>Guy of Watwick</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Confessio amantis</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Merlin</i>	–	–	–	–
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (S)	–	–	1	100%
<b>Total</b>	–	–	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>

Surprisingly, these two verbs appeared only in the two versions of *Mandeville's Travels*. Therefore, it is difficult to make any statements regarding their general use in the given regions.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of the presented study was to first investigate whether the choice of the verbs in the two versions of one text – northern and southern – is text-dependent or region-dependent, which would then show to what extent the results of the comparison may also be noticed in other Middle English texts. In addition, the aim was to check if words' etymology may be influential as regards the occurrence of the verbs in texts from different regions. In order to conduct the analysis, two geographically distinct versions of *Mandeville's Travels* were examined. After this, four representative texts from the north and the south were searched through using electronic corpora. Apart from the abovementioned objectives, the goal of

this study in progress was to improve the methodology which will be used in the forthcoming MA thesis.

As this small study shows, quantitative analyses indicate that some words of Old Norse origin (such as *call*) were more popular in the south than vernacular forms (such as *clepen*). In addition, contrary to what was expected after qualitative analyses, some words of Old French origin were not prevalent in the southern texts. It is not surprising, as the words might have spread from dialect to dialect during those times. Undoubtedly, this problem requires more thorough diachronic analysis. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that none of the verbs of Old Norse origin appeared exclusively in the south, and those of French origin – exclusively in the north. Moreover, according to expectations, most of the vernacular forms were distributed both in the north and the south. Interestingly, some words started to disappear from the English language altogether (e.g. *waten*). It may be important, then, to check when exactly this process took place. Some cases were problematic because of the limited data (e.g. *okeren-vsuren*). It is extremely difficult to make any reliable judgments based on the very small overall number of instances.

Interestingly enough, even the two regionally distinct versions of one text proved to be inconsistent as far as the choice of the verbs is concerned. The inconsistencies may be caused by several reasons. For example, the book might have been transcribed in fragments by different scribes. As a result, some words might have been changed because of individual, not regional preferences. A given word could have been either unfamiliar to the copyist or he might have avoided some equivalents deliberately. Hence, a vital question arises: to what extent are regional differences truly influential when idiosyncratic/stylistic aspect has to be taken into account? On the other hand, if the frequency of the words is relatively high, it is hard to exclude the possibility of some regional tendencies regarding word use.

To sum up, the study in the area of lexical preferences in the Middle English texts is certainly worth further exploration. In the future study, special attention will be paid to the variability resulting from such factors as the origin of the analysed manuscript. Moreover, as the presented study examines only the selected verbs, more examples of lexical differences will be investigated in the future, including different parts of speech. According to preliminary observations, nouns demonstrate more visible regional tendencies than verbs. In addition, greater emphasis will be put on semantic differences between words. Despite the fact that this might be extremely time-consuming, all the northern and East Midland texts from the *Corpus* will be searched through in the future in order to make the whole study more reliable.

## References

- Benskin, M., and M. Laing. 1981. Translations and Mischsprachen in Middle English Manuscripts. In *So many people longages and tonges: philological essays in Scots and mediaeval English presented to Angus McIntosh*, eds. M. Benskin, and M.L. Samuels, 55–106. Edinburgh: EUP.
- Black, M. 2000. Putting words in their place: an approach to Middle English word geography. In *Generative Theory and Corpus Studies: A Dialogue from 10 ICEHL*, eds. R. Bermúdez-Otero et al., 455–480. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Burrow, J.A., and T. Turville-Petre. 1996. *A Book of Middle English*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Crystal, D. 2004. *The stories of English*. London: Penguin.
- Dossena M., and R. Lass. 2004. Introduction. In *Methods and data in English Historical Dialectology*, eds. M. Dossena and R. Lass, 7–20. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Dossena M., and R. Lass. 2009. Introduction. In *Studies in English and European Historical Dialectology*, eds. M. Dossena and R. Lass, 7–14. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Fisiak, J. 1982. Isophones or Isographs? A Problem in Historical Dialectology. In *Language form and linguistic variation*, ed. J.A. Anderson, 117–128. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Fisiak, J. 2000. Middle English *beck* in the Midlands: the place-name evidence. In *Words: structure, meaning, function*, eds. Ch. Dalton-Puffer, N. Ritt, and D. Kastovsky, 87–94. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hebda, A. 2010. Onde and envy: a diachronic cognitive approach. In *Studies in Old and Middle English*, ed. J. Fisiak, 107–126. Łódź–Warszawa: WSIELL.
- Hoad, T. 1994. Word Geography: Previous Approaches and Achievements. In *Speaking in Our Tongues*, eds. M. Laing, and K. Williamson, 197–204. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Hudson, A. 1983. Observations on a northerner's vocabulary. In *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A Festschrift for Eric Dobson*, eds. E.G. Stanley, and D. Gray, 74–83. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Kaiser, R. 1937. *Zur Geographie des mittenglischen Wortschatzes*. Leipzig: Palestra 205.
- Laing, M., and R. Lass. 2006. Early Middle English Dialectology: Problems and Prospects. In *The handbook of the history of English*, eds. A. van Kemenade, and B. Los, 417–451. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- McIntosh, A. 1978. Middle English word-geography: its potential role in the study of the long-term impact of the Scandinavian settlements upon English. In *The Vikings: Proceedings of the Symposium of the Faculty of Arts of Uppsala University, June 6–9, 1997*, eds. T. Anderson and K.I. Sandred, 124–30. Uppsala.

- McIntyre, D. 2008. *History of English: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.
- Meurman-Solin, A. 2000a. Change from above or from below? Mapping the loci of linguistic change in the history of Scottish English. In *The Development of Standard English, 1300–1800: theories, descriptions, conflicts*, ed. L. Wright, 155–70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meurman-Solin, A. 2000b. On the conditioning of geographical and social distance in language variation and change in Renaissance Scots. In *The History of English in a Social Context. A Contribution to Historical Sociolinguistics*, eds. D. Kastovsky, and A. Mettinger, 227–55. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Seymour, M.C. 2002. *The Defective Version of Mandeville's Travels*. Oxford: Oxford.
- Wardale, E.E. 1956. *An introduction to Middle English*. Oxford: Taylor & Francis.

### Internet sources

- CME – Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/>. Accessed June 2014.
- eLALME – Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English online. <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html>. Accessed May 2014.
- Middle English Dictionary online. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>. Accessed June 2014.
- Online Etymology Dictionary. <http://www.etymonline.com/>. Accessed May 2014.
- Map 1 – <http://kids.britannica.com/comptons/art-143574/Middle-English-dialects-of-England>. Accessed June 2014.
- Maps 2 and 3 – <http://en.wikipedia.org>. Accessed June 2014.

## LINGUISTICS

### PHONETICS, DIALECTOLOGY, HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS

Synchronic variability in the area of phonetics, phonology, vocabulary, morphology and syntax is a natural feature of any language, including English. The existence of competing variants is in itself a fascinating phenomenon, but it is also a prerequisite for diachronic changes. This volume is a collection of studies which investigate variability from a contemporary and historical perspective, in both native and non-native varieties of English. The topics include Middle English spelling variation, lexical differences between Middle English dialects, Late Middle and Early Modern English forms of address, Middle English negation patterns, the English used by Polish immigrants living in London, lexical fixedness in native and non-native English used by Polish learners, and the phenomenon of phonetic imitation in Polish learners of English. The book should be of interest to anyone interested in English linguistics, especially English phonetics and phonology as well as history of English, historical dialectology and pragmatics.

The book is also available  
as an e-book



WYDAWNICTWO  
UNIwersytetu  
ŁÓDZKIEGO

ul. Williama Lindleya 8  
90-131 Łódź

tel.: 42 66 55 863  
e-mail: [ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl](mailto:ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl)

ISBN 978-83-8088-065-8



9 788380 880658